

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HJ 19  
2015 MONTANA STATE LEGISLATURE  
February 18, 2015 Jim Posewitz Helena, MT

EXHIBIT 17  
DATE 2/18/2015  
~~HB~~ HJR 19

*HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19*

*A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA EMPHASIZING THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LANDS IN MONTANA TO THE STATE'S ECONOMY, RECREATION, HERITAGE AND QUALITY OF LIFE; AND OPPOSING ANY EFFORT TO CLAIM, TAKE OVER, LITIGATION FOR OR SELL OFF FEDERAL LANDS WITHIN THE STATE OF MONTANA.*

My name is Jim Posewitz and I am a board member and secretary of the Helena Hunters and Anglers Association. I appear in support of HJ 19 and offer a testimony focused on the conservation "heritage" aspect of this resolution.

The historical record supports the idea that our unique North American land and wildlife conservation ethic emerged on Montana's Northern Great Plains late in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. When the Montana Stockgrowers Association met in Miles City in the middle of the 1880s a biographer noted; *"The absorbing issues before the convention were the Texas fever and overstocking of the range."* The trails of two exceptional conservationists crossed at that meeting. One was Granville Stuart who, as a Territorial Legislator, struggled to conserve Montana fish and wildlife. The other, a member of the Stockgrowers Executive Committee as representative for Dakota Territory, was described as a *"... great admirer of Granville Stuart, and was always on his side of every question."* That other budding conservationist, not yet thirty years old, was Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>1</sup>

While time does not allow telling of the whole story, it is clear that Theodore Roosevelt's conservation epiphany occurred during the time he spent on the northern plains, much of it in Montana. This is a Montana story – Our Heritage. In 1887 Roosevelt and others formed the Boone and Crockett Club for the *introduction of the sporting code and the restoration of big game to North America*. The national headquarters of that organization is today located in Montana. That group, in 1891, got legislation through the U.S. Congress enabling presidents to set aside *"forest reserves"* for conserving forest resources and facilitating the restoration of wildlife to a badly depleted continent.

In time that young rancher-conservationist became our president and as president he set aside more lands to create a public conservation estate than any other president in American history. For those Montanans who enjoy fishing, hunting, open space, or simply savor time in the wild -- it was an estate of hope.

History gave an identity to those who opposed these actions and they are remembered as the "Robber Barons" of that time. Theodore Roosevelt was pretty clear about who his actions were for; and, why he was a conservation advocate. In his autobiography he told us he was

<sup>1</sup> Herman Hagedorn, Roosevelt in the Badlands, Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association, Medora, ND, McIntosh and Otis Inc, 1921.

doing it for the benefit of *"the average man and the average woman who make up the body of the American people."* and for those generations *"... within the womb of time."* That of course is us.

Then as now there was resistance. One of Montana's U.S. Senators at the time was William A. Clark. History came to characterize those who shared Clark's exploitive tendencies as the "Robber Barons" of that era. When TR left the presidency the assault on his many reforms, including conservation, was immediate. His successor William H. Taft was quick to abandon the conservation reforms and fired Gifford Pinchot while Roosevelt was in Africa on his first post-presidential hunt.

The challenges to TR's reforms, including public lands and resources, led to the elections of 1912 and the emergence of the Bull Moose Party. Montana had replaced William A. Clark in the U. S. Senate with Joseph M. Dixon a progressive Republican who also served as TR's campaign manager and later served as Montana's governor (1921-1925). This is a Montana heritage story.

There is no statue or portrait in this building honoring the service of William A. Clark. In one corner of the Rotunda there is the bust of Joseph M. Dixon - honoring his service to Montana. On Monday of this week, I stood by that likeness of former U. S. Senator and Governor Joseph M. Dixon, as Montana people packed the Rotunda to rally in support of the legacy and heritage he, TR, Granville Stuart, and so many others passed to our custody. Theodore Roosevelt knew we would be there for in his 1913 autobiography he wrote: *"... Westerners who live in the neighborhood of the forest preserves are the men who in the last resort will determine whether or not these preserves are to be permanent."*<sup>2</sup> On Monday of this week we packed the rotunda.

I urge that you join those who now symbolize Montana's proud conservation record and heritage and vote in support of HJR 19

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In his autobiography, after reviewing his conservation record, Theodore Roosevelt concluded:

*"The things accomplished ... were of immediate consequences to the economic well-being of our people. In addition certain things were done of which the economic bearing was remote, but which bore directly upon our welfare, because they add to the beauty of living and therefore to the joy of life."*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Theodore Roosevelt *"Wilderness Reserves: The Yellowstone Park,"* from *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905, pp. 320-353.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, DaCapo Press Inc. , Reprint, 1985.